



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

The general result is not a favorable one. The per centage of gross earnings to capital invested, has been at the rate of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.—net do., at the rate of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The large addition, from earnings, to construction, by some of the roads, particularly by the Atlantic and St. Lawrence, is one reason for the comparatively small ratio of *net* earnings.

All the railroads of Maine, with the exception of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence, have a very light traffic in *freight*, owing to the almost unrivalled facilities for communication by water which the State possesses.

The dividends on the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad have been paid by the Grand Trunk, of Canada, under an agreement between two companies.

## ON THE MANNER OF TAKING A CENSUS.

*To the Committee of Publication  
of the Am. Geo. and Stat. Society :*

GENTLEMEN—In a former communication, I noticed some of the difficulties in the way of obtaining full and accurate census returns, as encountered in the persons employed upon the service. Allow me in this, to examine some of the obstacles that will be met among the people themselves, from whom the primary facts are to be obtained, and upon the precision of which everything else depends.

First, because greatest, I will name *ignorance*, as an obstacle to satisfactory returns, which can only be overcome by promoting general intelligence, and especially by diffusing correct notions of the purposes and wants of this great national inquiry. I use this term in the general way, to express a want of information upon the particular points that require specific answers, and which are to be represented by definite figures as the basis of general deductions.

There is generally much more precision with regard to the returns of the personal census, than those of agriculture, manufactures, and other collateral inquiries; and as returned in 1855, I am convinced that in an exceedingly

large proportion of cases, these statistics were strictly correct. Whatever apprehensions the unenlightened portions of the public may have, of some sinister motive on the part of government, with regard to establishing a basis for taxation, there can scarcely be found a person, however ignorant, who has had the slightest acquaintance with our institutions, that would entertain a suspicion that a tax or other burden was to grow out of the personal inquiries of the census, or who could not have known from his own observation, that taxes upon the person, except for highway labor, and a few minor objects in some States, are unknown among us. The fear of military conscription prevented a few newly arrived emigrants from giving freely the required answers to the interrogatories; and strange as it may appear, the dread of pestilence, like that which visited the Israelites after the census ordered by David, still finds place in the minds of the superstitious.\* These objections are, however, so rare that they become curiosities, rather than difficulties requiring special effort for removal. Whatever defects the census may show with regard to personal statistics, they must therefore be mainly attributed to other causes than unwillingness on the part of those giving in the returns. The number of persons whose ages were not given in years or months, according to the instructions, in 1855, in New York State, was less than a fifth of one per cent.; and those whose place of birth was unknown, were less than half of one per cent. of the total population. The principal defects in these cases, probably arose in most instances from the answers being given by other persons than those to whom they related.

Statistics of agriculture and manufactures, when returned with the utmost good faith by the proper persons for giving them, must often be widely variant from facts, on account of the absence of data for correct returns. When we reflect that farmers seldom survey the fields devoted to particular crops, or weigh the hay

\* II Samuel, xxiv, 15.

fed upon their farms, or measure the supplies consumed in their families, or the roots and grains fed to their stock, we must be prepared to find the census returns of these items founded upon estimates more or less approaching the truth, according to the soundness of judgment or systematic habits of the person answering the inquiries. Manufactures conducted methodically, and limited to the consumption of a few kinds of material, and the yielding of few kinds of product, are liable to but few difficulties in obtaining their statistics, the principal of which arises from the fact that the inquiries are made at a season of the year when the accounts are not posted up. The period which they embrace, extending through parts of two years, renders comparison with statistics for the civil year inconvenient and liable to error. The greatest difficulty incident to the procuring of manufacturing statistics, arises from the mixed and complicated character of the business, which may in one place embrace many distinct pursuits that elsewhere are reported separately. A furnace for reducing iron from the ore, may, for example, be connected with an iron foundry, smith shops, machine shops for working wood and metals, and the manufacture of a great variety of articles, which, as they are conducted together, will defy the most patient attempts at analysis, in assigning to each its due proportion of labor and capital. For this difficulty there can scarcely be hoped a remedy, and the science of statistics must, in many cases, be content with a general statement of values, and a very comprehensive plan of classification.

Inquiries of a historical character have been in some census schedules, but generally without satisfactory result. However desirable it might be to ascertain the date of establishment on a general retrospect of operations, this information often requires an amount of investigation or a search after absent records, that must be left to the local historian, rather than be imposed upon the Census Marshal. Of a still more objectionable and wholly impracticable character, would be inquiries implying professional education or special qualifications, such

as those relating to geology or natural history, which, to be worth anything, must be obtained by skillful persons, carefully instructed and generally familiar with the subject. There is constantly a tendency to the introduction of special inquiries into the census, to supply information that may interest a small class, but would prove of little general utility.\* They may perhaps, of themselves, be important, but in general, should be ascertained by investigations made for the particular purpose, by those whom they especially concern.

Respectfully yours,

FRANKLIN B. HOUGH.

ALBANY, March 8, 1859.

#### RUSSIAN AMERICA.

	1854.	1855.
Revenue—Products from sale of furs	\$568,563	\$564,689
“ “ other articles	258,415	268,060
Total .....	\$826,978	\$832,749
Expenses of administration in Russia and the colonies.....	\$400,362	\$424,435
Assurances, cost of freights and duties paid .....	277,759	259,457
Total .....	\$678,121	\$683,892
Russian population, Jan. 1, 1856.....	9,725	

#### SURINAM AND THE DUTCH WEST INDIES.

In 1854 the population of Surinam consisted of:—

Free.....	13,793	viz.,	Males, 6,990	Females, 6,803
Slave.....	38,545	“	18,313	“ 20,232
Total ..	52,338	“	25,303	“ 27,035

and contained 256 plantations, on which were residing 924 free, and 32,524 slave persons. Of these 91 were sugar, 52 coffee, 15 cocoa and cocoa, and 32 cotton plantations.

The sugar exports were, in the year named: to the Netherlands, 22,055,108 lbs.; to North America, 4,654,276 lbs.; and to other places, 6,376,634 lbs.—total, 33,083,018 lbs., valued at 2,333,763 gulden. The molasses exported was:

\* In preparing the schedules for the New York State Census of 1855, the Secretary of State received suggestions in some instances strikingly illustrative of the above statement. One correspondent wished inquiries about the kind and quantity of timber; another, the number of sheep slain by dogs, and others, subjects quite as foreign as these to the legitimate objects of the census.